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Always There*

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CST takes 1st place at Urban Shield

By Maj. Tony Vincelli
101st CST Deputy Commander

Members of the Idaho National Guard's 101st Weapons of Mass Destruction Civil Support Team won first place in Urban Shield 2013 Oct 26-27 in Oakland, Calif.

They joined forces with civilian first responders from around Idaho for the second consecutive year to compete as an ad-hoc hazard response team that performed well in a variety of realistic scenarios, said Army National Guard Capt. Robert Grimes, survey team leader for the 101st CST and officer-in-charge of Idaho's Urban Shield team.

"Because of past training we've done with firefighters assigned to regional response teams around the state, we worked well together with very little preparation," said Captain Grimes.

Now in its seventh year, Urban Shield is a continuous, 48-hour full scale multi-disciplinary homeland security and disaster preparedness exercise hosted by more than 200 local, state and federal agencies in Northern California's Bay Area.

These types of exercises have proven beneficial around the country. According to Boston Police Commissioner Edward Davis, training his agency and other local agencies participated in played an important role in the quality of the response to the Boston Marathon Bombing.

Captain Grimes agrees.

"We went to Urban Shield to get training value, not to win a competition. It will certainly help our readiness as a team



Wearing an orange Level-A suit, Spec. Cody Killeen, 101st CST (Idaho), and Lewiston, Idaho firefighter John Ockwell prepare to mitigate a leaking valve using a C Kit on a tanker car filled with chlorine Oct. 27 at Urban Shield in Oakland, Calif. Now in its seventh year, Urban Shield has become one of the largest homeland defense and disaster preparedness exercises on the West Coast. (Photo by Capt. Robert Grimes, 101st CST).

and our ability to work with our civilian counterparts in the future," he said.

CST personnel and firefighters participated in 10 training scenarios ranging from responding to an Improvised Explosive Device or overturned flammable liquid tanker truck to mitigating intentional damage to critical infrastructure by terrorist groups. They were evaluated on their ability to survey the incident scene, establish a safe perimeter, identify the hazard, participate in a unified command and decontaminate the scene. This was achieved using the CST's arsenal of detection equipment and personal protective gear.

Idaho's joint team consisted of experienced CST members Air Force Master Sgt. Aaron Decker and Army

Staff Sgt. Lucas Revaul. They were joined by Spec. Cody Killeen, who has been on the CST for less than a year. Firefighters from Lewiston, Caldwell, Boise and Pocatello rounded out the 10-member

team. The first place finish was as attributable to the RRT members and their experience in pure HAZMAT response as it was to the CST, said Sergeant Decker.

The 101st CST conducts more than a dozen training exercises every year, often with regional responders from around the state. Each

member of the 22-person team is HAZMAT technician certified to respond to any number of chemical, biological and radiological scenarios.

As Captain Grimes pointed out, the value of any training is only as good as the level of realism it portrays in order to prepare the team for the inevitability of real-world response.

"Urban Shield is something we look forward to continuing to do based on the training we receive," he said.

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